

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15

ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 AID-20 MC-02 TRSE-00 IGA-02

DRC-01 SR-02 ORM-03 /156 W  
----- 123235

R 311035Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3620

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CJCS WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 PHNOM PENH 11886

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, CB

SUBJECT: STATUS OF THE AUTO-DEFENSE PROGRAM IN CAMBODIA

REF: (A) PHNOM PENH 8663

(B) PHNOM PENH A-125

1. SUMMARY. THE AUTO-DEFENSE PROGRAM HAS CONTINUED TO EXPAND AT A RAPID PACE AND MAY BE EXCEEDING FANK'S CAPABILITY TO PROVIDE WEAPONS AND, IN SOME AREAS, ADEQUATE REACTION FORCES. THE APPROVAL OF THE DEFENSE SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET AND THE SIGNING OF A PROJECT AGREEMENT HAS NOW PERMITTED RELEASE OF COUNTER PART FUNDS FOR TRAINING AND FURTHER EQUIPPING OF UNITS BEFORE THE DRY SEASON AND RICE HARVEST. FANK HAS REQUESTED THAT US ASSISTANCE BE EXPANDED IN 1974 TO COVER TWICE AGAIN AS MANY UNITS. THIS REPORT CONTAINS INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE GKR ON THE CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE PLANS OF THE PROGRAM AS WELL AS  
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THE MISSION'S OBSERVATIONS OF THE AUTO-DEFENSE SITUATION

IN INDIVIDUAL PROVINCES. END SUMMARY.

2. TWENTY-EIGHT KHUMS COMPRISING 79 SECTIONS OF NEARLY 7,000 MEN HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE GKR-SUPPORTED AUTO-DEFENSE IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS, BRINGING THE OVERALL TOTAL TO 139 KHUMS (OF WHICH 50 ARE SUPPORTED BY US ASSISTANCE), 705 SECTIONS AND 63,580 MEN. ONLY SOME 8000 NEW WEAPONS WERE DISTRBUTED, HOWEVER, BRINGING THE TOTAL ISSUED TO 12,100 AND THE DEFICIT TO 13,000 RIFLES, OF WHICH NEARLY 3,000 ARE NEEDED BY THE US-SUPPORTED 50-KHUM PROGRAM. FURTHER DISTRIBUTION OF RIFLES IN THE CENTRAL DEPOT HAS BEEN SUSPENDED UNTIL THE REQUIREMENTS CREATED BY THE NEWLY INITIATED CONSCRIPTION/RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN HAVE BEEN DETERMINED. WE ARE LOOKING INTO THIS PROBLEM.

3. AS IS THE CASE WITH VIRTUALLY ALL CENTRALLY COMPUTED STATISTICS IN CAMBODIA, THE ABOVE FIGURES PROVIDE ONLY A BROAD INDICATION OF ACTUAL ACTIVITIES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THEY ERR ON THE CONSERVATIVE SIDE. BURGEONING PROGRAMS IN KOMPONG SOM AND KAMPOT VISITED BY EMBASSY OFFICERS (SEE PARA 10 AND 11 BELOW) HAVE NEVER BEEN REPORTED TO PHNOM PENH, FOR EXAMPLE, AND DO NOT FIGURE IN CURRENT OR FUTURE PLANNING OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAM. EMBASSY VISITORS TO BATTAMBANG ALSO FOUND AUTHORITIES THERE CLAIMING TO HAVE ENROLLED SEVEN TIMES THE NUMBER OF MEN AND TO HAVE DISTRIBUTED TEN TIMES THE NUMBER OF RIFLES SHOWN IN THE CENTRAL REPORT (PARA 8).

4. UPON THE APPROVAL OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET, A PROJECT AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED FOR THE RELEASE OF 30 MILLION RIELS IN COUNTERPART FUNDS TO FINANCE MEDICAL KITS, OTHER SUPPLIES AND TRAINING FOR THE 50-KHUM PROGRAM. GKR LEGAL TECHNICALITIES ARE, HOWEVER, HOLDING UP DISBURSEMENT OF THE TRAINING FUNDS. BECAUSE TRAINING MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED IN MOST AREAS BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE RICE HARVEST IN DECEMBER, WE HAVE ASKED THE NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE MG THAPPANA NGINN TO GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION TO THIS PROBLEM.

5. A TWO-WEEK, 100-HOUR TRAINING PROGRAM FOR UNIT LEADERS, CONFIDENTIAL

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MEDICS AND RADIO OPERATORS HAS IN THE MEANTIME BEEN DESIGNED BY THE FANK J-3. INSTRUCTIONS WILL LEAN HEAVILY ON TACTICS, WEAPONS FAMILIARITY AND RANGE PRACTICE (66 HOURS) AND INCLUDES INSTRUCTIONS IN RADIO COMMUNICATIONS AND FIRST AID (12 HOURS EACH) PLUS INFORMATION GATHERING, SUPPLY, AND ORGANIZING AND COORDINATING AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS (2 HOURS EACH). AT MARSHAL LON NOL'S INSISTENCE, THE LAST FOUR HOURS IS DEVOTED TO POLITICAL WARFARE, CIVICS AND

KHMER HISTORY. ACCORDING TO PRESENT PLANS, THIS TRAINING IN MOST INSTANCES WILL BE CONDUCTED BY NEARBY TERRITORIAL UNITS IN ORDER TO BUILD UP BONDS BETWEEN THE AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS AND THEIR REACTION FORCES.

6. WE HAVE RECEIVED THROUGH THE LIBERATION AND NATION-BUILDING DIRECTORATE A REQUEST THAT US SUPPORT FOR AUTO-DEFENSE BE EXPANDED IN 1974 TO COVER 150 KHUMS (VICE 50 IN 1973). WE NOTED THAT, WHILE COUNTERPART FUNDS MIGHT BE AVAILABLE FOR THIS PURPOSE, THE PROVIDING OF ADDITIONAL RADIOS UNDER MAP WOULD DEPEND UPON CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON THE ADMINISTRATION'S REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING.

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ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 AID-20 MC-02 TRSE-00 IGA-02

DRC-01 SR-02 ORM-03 /156 W  
----- 123388

R 311035Z OCT 73  
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3621  
INFO SECDEF WASHDC  
CJCS WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY SAIGON  
CINCPAC  
COMUSSAG

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7. AMONG THE PROVINCES, BATTAMBANG, A SLOW STARTER, HAS PERHAPS MADE THE MOST PROGRESS IN AUTO-DEFENSE DURING THE PAST TWO MONTHS.

A. BRIEF INSPECTIONS BY EMBASSY OFFICERS IN THE COURSE OF DELIVERING 13 PRC-10 RADIOS TO 5 PHUMS AND BATTAMBANG'S

NORTHERNMOST SUBURB INDICATED THAT THIS PROVINCE HAS THE BEST ARMED SELF-DEFENSE UNITS IN THE COUNTRY. AT PHUM CHRUOY SDAU IN KHUM TAMOEUN (TVOPPURILN FOR EXMAPLE, HALF OF THE 180 AUTO-DEFENDERS HAD MODERN WEAPONS.

ALL WERE PUT TO GOOD USE

IN LATE AUGUST DURING AN ALL-NIGHT FIREFIGHT AGAINST AN ESTIMATED 200-MAN ENEMY FORCE WITH THE UNITS CLAIMING 8 ENEMY KILLED AND 10 WOUNDED. ALTHOUGH SOMEWHAT LESS WELL ARMED, FOUR OTHER VILLAGES IN THE AREA HAD THEIR FULL QUOTA OF RIFLES.

B. COOPERATION BETWEEN VILLAGE AUTO-DEFENDERS AND OFFICERS OF THE PROVINCE AND MILITARY REGION, WHICH WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTANT A FEW MONTHS AGO, SEEMS TO BE DEVELOPING ENCOURAGINGLY. EMBASSY OFFICERS ALSO NOTED THAT THE PROGRAM IS RECEIVING STRONG SUPPORT FROM BUDDHIST MONKS IN MOST OF THE VILLAGES VISITED.

C. THE MAIN WEAKNESS IN THE BATTAMBANG PROGRAM WOULD APPEAR TO BE INADEQUATE TIES BETWEEN AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS AND FANK REACTION FORCES. AN UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION THERE ON THE PART OF BOTH VILLAGERS AND OFFICIALMKLRT THAT GOOD WEAPONS AND SPIRIT WILL ENSURE VICTORY.

8. PURSAT GOVERNOR BG KEM THI HAS PROVIDED US A SOMEWHAT SOMBER SUMMARY OF HIS PROVINCE'S AUTO-DEFENSE PROGRAM, ONCE ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST PROMISING BUT NOW SUFFERING FROM SIGCBIFICANTLY INCREASED ENEMY ACTIVITY AND THE LACK OF A LOCAL INTERVENTION FORCE.

A. ACCORDING TO KEM THI, EIGHT SMALL VILLAGE UNITS IN THE VICINITY OF KHMAR (UU 7495) WERE ATTACKED WHEN AN ESTIMATED 600-MAN ENEMY FORCE OVERRAN A TERRITORIAL POST THERE. TWO OF THE AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS WERE ALSO OVERRUN WITH THE LOSS OF 42 VILLAGERS KILLED AND 32 WEAPONS. AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PROVINCE, A UNIT AT BAMNAK (VV1159) WAS ATTACKED WITH THE LOSS OF 17 WEAPONS AND SIX KILLED.

B. ENEMY PRESSURES HAVE, OF COURSE, AFFECTED THIS PROVINCE'S ENTHUSIASM FOR AUTO-DEFENSE. ONE AUTO-DEFENSE UNIT RETURNED ITS WEAPONS AND SEVERAL OTHERS HAVE SOUGHT REFUGE IN PURSAT OR OTHER POPULATION CENTERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, ONE EXPOSED UNIT IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE PROVINCE REFUSED FANK'S SUGGESTION THAT IT ABANDON ITS POSITION OR DISSOLVE THE UNIT.

C. AS THE ENEMY NOW HAS BUILT UP A SIZEABLE PERMANENT FORCE IN PURSAT PROVINCE, THE AUTO-DEFENSE PROGRAM THERE CANNOT DEVELOP FURTHER UNTIL THE MSD ACQUIRES INTER-

VENTION FORCES (ALL REGULAR FORCES ARE NOW IN STATIC POSITIONS). ONE RECENTLY RECRUITED BATTALION WILL RETURN FROM THE TRAINING CENTER IN NOVEMBER FOR THIS PURPOSE, AND KEMTHI HAS REQUESTED PERMISSION TO RECRUIT ANOTHER.

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9. SIEM REAP GOVERNOR IV THAN TELLS US THAT A MODERATE INCREASE IN ENEMY ACTIVITY IN HIS AREA HAS NOT AFFECTED THE EXPANSION OF AUTO-DEFENSE. HE MAINTAINS, IN FACT, THAT AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS HAVE ON OCCASION GONE ON THE OFFENSIVE, PARTICIPATING IN THE REOCCUPATION OF PHNOM KRAOM SOUTH OF THE CITY AND ATTACKING ENEMY PATROLS HARASSING FISHERMEN.

10. ALTHOUGH KOMPONG SOM IS NOT NOW AND IS NOT SCHEDULED TO BE INCLUDED AMONG THOSE PROVINCES RECEIVING AUTO-DEFENSE SUPPORT FROM LENA, THE NEW CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE MILITARY SUB-DISTRICT THERE HAS ORGANIZED, ARMED AND TRAINED ABOUT EIGHT SECTIONS. THESE UNITS ARE INTEGRATED INTO THE PORT CITY'S OVERALL DEFENSE PLAN. THIS INITIATIVE IN A PROVINCE WHICH EARLIER EXPRESSED NO INTEREST IN AUTO-DEFENSE AGAIN UNDERSCORES THE PREDOMINANT ROLE LOCAL LEADERSHIP PLAYS IN THE PROGRAM.

11. KAMPOT PROVINCE HAS ALSO INITIATED AN AUTO-DEFENSE PROGRAM OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF BOTH US AND LENA AUTO-DEFENSE PLANNING. ENTHUSIASTIC VILLAGERS BACKED BY GOVERNOR AND MSD COMMANDER BG MEY SICHAN HAVE ORGANIZED 1,800 MEN WITH 750 OLD CARBINES TO PROTECT 27 PHUMS. AGGRESSIVE PHUMS HAVE PATROLLED RICE FIELDS BEYOND FANK'S CONTROL DURING THE DAY, RETIRING TO THEIR VILLAGES IN THE EVENING, AND HAVE ENGAGED SMALL ENEMY FORCES WITH RESULTING CASUALTIES ON BOTH SIDES. GENERAL MEY SICHAN, WHOSE REACTION FORCES ARE LIMITED, HAS NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM'S ABILITY TO WITHSTAND ENEMY REGULAR TROOPS, HOWEVER.

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ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 AID-20 MC-02 TRSE-00 IGA-02

DRC-01 SR-02 ORM-03 /156 W

----- 123484

R 311035Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3622

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CJCS WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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12. PERHAPS THE MOST EXPOSED AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS ARE IN THE PHNOM PENH AREA.

A. SOUTH OF THE CITY NEAR THE PREK THNAOT FRONT, THE 51ST BRIGADE COMMANDER HAS ORGANIZED SMALL AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS IN FOUR PHUMS IN THE PHUM PREY VENG AREA (VT8267). THE 51ST BRIGADE HOPES TO EXPAND THIS PROGRAM, WHICH TAPS MALES FROM 40-60 YEARS OF AGE, AS REFUGEES FLOW BACK FROM PHNOM PENH TO HARVEST THE RAPIDLY RIPENING RICE IN THE AREA. EACH OF THE FOUR PHUMS NOW ORGANIZED HAS THREE 51ST BRIGADE PERSONNEL ARMED WITH AN M-79 AND M-16S TO INSTRUCT THE VILLAGERS AND ASSIST AS NECESSARY. AS YET, HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO RADIOS WITH WHICH TO CONTACT THE 51ST BRIGADE IN TIMES OF TROUBLE.

B. CHBAR AMPEOU ACROSS THE BASSAC FROM PHNOM PENH HAS THE STRONGEST PROGRAM IN THE CAPITAL AREA, ORGANIZED AS A REACTION TO THE EARLY AUGUST ENEMY DRIVE THAT PENE-  
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TRATED A FEW KILOMETERS INTO THE KHAND BEFORE STALLING. AN 800-FAMILY VILLAGE IN THAT AREA ORGANIZED IN LATE SUMMER A UNIT OF 300 MEN TO CARRY 130 OLD WEAPONS. THE KHAND HAD AT THAT TIME ONLY A 40-MAN TERRITORIAL FORCE TO ASSIST AUTO-DEFENDERS BUT CHBAR AMPEOU HAS RECENTLY BEEN DESIGNATED HEADQUARTERS FOR AN INTERVENTION BATTALION.

C. PHNOM PENH'S NORTHERMOST WARD HAS IN CONTRAST PUT

LITTLE EFFORT INTO AUTO-DEFENSE DESPITE PRETENSES TO THE CONTRARY. A NIGHT INSPECTION OF UNITS THERE REVEALED LEADERS TO HAVE LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF WHERE THEIR MEN WERE POSTED OR HOW MANY MEN THEY ACTUALLY HAD.

D. WE UNDERSTAND THAT PHNOM PENH AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS HAVE DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS RECEIVED A LARGE AND SUDDEN INFLUX OF VOLUNTEERS AS DRAFT-AGE MEN ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE THE NEWLY INSTITUTED CONSCRIPTION PROGRAM. THIS WILL HOPEFULLY BE A TEMPORARY PHENOMENON, HOWEVER, AS THE CITY'S SUBDIVISIONS START TO CALL UP AUTO-DEFENDERS IN ORDER TO MEET THEIR QUOTAS.

13. JUDGING FROM ITS PROPAGANDA BROADCASTS, THE ENEMY SEEMS TO BE TURNING MORE ATTENTION TOWARD THE GKR AUTO-DEFENSE PROGRAM. A POLMIL OFFICER'S VISIT TO KAMPOT WAS THE SUBJECT OF ONE COMMENTARY WHICH TRIED TO TAR THE PROGRAM WITH AN AMERICAN BRUSH BY HAMMERING AT THE "SUBSERVIENT OF KHMER "LACKEYS" WHO WERE "ORDERED BY AN AMERICAN SECOND SECRETARY" TO SHOW THEIR PROGRAM. THE CLANDESTINE RADIO ALSO BOASTED OF ITS DESTRUCTION OF AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS IN PURSAT PROVINCE AND CLAIMED THAT THOSE IN KOMPONG CHHNANG WERE ONLY BIDDING THEIR TIME UNTIL A CPNLF OFFENSIVE GIVES THEM A CHANCE TO RISE UP AND LIBERATE THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL.

14. CONCLUSIONS. WE WILL NOT CONSIDER PROVIDING RADIOS FOR AN ADDITIONAL 100 KUHMS UNLESS THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN MAP FUNDING. WE ARE, HOWEVER, CONSIDERING AGREEING TO THE USE OF COUNTERPART FUNDS TO COVER THE ESTIMATED 75 MILLION RIEL COST OF THE ENTIRE 150 KHUM PROGRAM; A FINAL DECISION WILL BE MADE WHEN WE HAVE OBSERVED THE USE OF THE 30 MILLION RIELS NOW BEING RELEASED FOR THE 50 KHUM PROGRAM.

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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** elyme  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 7  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** (A) PHNOM PENH 8663  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** elyme  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 21 NOV 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <21-Nov-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <04-Jan-2002 by elyme>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** STATUS OF THE AUTO-DEFENSE PROGRAM IN CAMBODIA  
**TAGS:** MILI, PINS, CB  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005